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OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHKI #1044/01 3301038
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 251038Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8821
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001044

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - NOVEMBER 25

REF: KINSHASA 1026

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Security Situation

¶2. (SBU) A senior MONUC military official briefed Kinshasa-based diplomats on November 24, positing that Nkunda's decision to withdraw (reftel) 40 kilometers was tactical, not in deference to Obasanjo or the international community. Rather, MONUC believes the CNDP withdrawal gives it better control over the far-flung area it now occupies and improves its defense. MONUC also raised the possibility that the CNDP may be consolidating its forces to attack Sake, when the situation is optimal.

¶3. (SBU) According to the MONUC military official, new FARDC Chief of Staff Etumba's top priority is to re-organize the FARDC to launch an attack on the CNDP. FARDC troops in Equateur Province have reportedly been transferred to Beni for eventual deployment against the CNDP. In MONUC's view, the FARDC might be able to achieve success at a "very local" level, but the FARDC would be unable to hold any captured CNDP territory in the long run.

¶4. (SBU) At a Goma MONUC briefing, it was noted that there are rumors of an entente between certain PARECO forces (the Lafontaine faction) and the CNDP. The entente is supposedly coalescing because of mutual hostility towards FARDC human rights abuses against local populations.

¶5. (SBU) MONUC Goma also reported that there are rumors that the CNDP has co-opted or bought off certain FARDC elements to deliberately sabotage FARDC operations. In one case, senior FARDC officials reprimanded two FARDC commanders, who were too effective against the CNDP.

¶6. (SBU) UN and humanitarian organizations reported ongoing incidents of banditry and citizen reprisals throughout Goma. During the night of November 24, local residents captured and killed a bandit in Goma, the seventh bandit to be killed in recent days.

¶7. (SBU) On the evening of November 23, FARDC troops stopped eight MONUC trucks at Monigi transporting 26 surrendered Mai-Mai/PARECO to Goma for DDR processing. Rumors spread that the trucks contained CNDP soldiers in uniforms and UN berets. Despite some calls for an anti-MONUC demonstration, the FARDC allowed the trucks to pass and no demonstration took place.

LRA Corridor

¶8. (SBU) MONUC reported that the GDRC has observed a cease-fire,

which would allow LRA elements to travel through protected corridors to the north. However, MONUC has not detected any movement by LRA forces in the corridors. No recent fighting has occurred in the areas where the LRA operates.

Political Developments

¶9. (SBU) UN Special Envoy Obasanjo will visit Kinshasa November 28, meeting with President Kabila before traveling to Goma to meet with the DRC and Rwandan Foreign Ministers. Afterwards, he hopes to meet with CNDP leader Nkunda and FDLR officials.

¶10. (SBU) DRC Foreign Minister Thambwe Mwamba has reportedly written UNSG Ban Ki Moon to state that the GDRC does not want any Indian forces included in the additional MONUC troops approved by the UNSC. The letter further requests that Indian troops be rotated out of North Kivu into other parts of the DRC. Members of the international community noted that there may indeed be no alternative to the Indian troops.

Humanitarian Situation

¶11. (SBU) The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced that no humanitarian staff had yet traveled to Kanyabayonga. According to OCHA, travel to Kanyabayonga is possible, if extreme caution is taken.

¶12. (SBU) MONUC estimates that approximately 200,000 residents near Kanyabayonga are sleeping in the bush, too afraid to return to homes

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and villages. MONUC added that the nearby towns showed signs of FARDC looting.

¶13. (SBU) At a November 24 coordination meeting, humanitarian agencies discussed the appropriateness of delivering assistance to the families of FARDC soldiers. The group was divided between those who believed the FARDC families should be treated as IDPs and those who believed it was the government's responsibility and that feeding families would be taking sides in the conflict. IOM volunteered to deliver assistance to the approximately 5,000 FARDC families between Kanyabayonga and Beni and the 3,600 families between Sake and Minova. OCHA will write to Security Sector Reform donors to elicit support for providing such assistance.

GARVELINK